

Recruitment Committee Needs Help To Address Physician Shortage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PEMBROKE – According to the Upper Ottawa Valley Medical Recruitment Committee, the sudden resignation of Dr. Norman Sutherland has pushed an already significant physician shortage in the area into crisis mode.

Committee Chair Patricia Pringle said prior to Dr. Sutherland’s resignation it was estimated that 20% of local residents were without a family physician, and now, with his patient roster estimated to have been in the thousands, that percentage of unattached patients has now reached a critical and dangerous level.

“While our commitment to the recruitment and retention of medical professionals for the Upper Ottawa Valley continues, in response to this critical shortage of family physicians, the Committee hopes local municipalities, businesses and other community organizations will join forces and work with us to take immediate actions necessary to assist area residents,” Ms. Pringle said.

“During the next few weeks, representatives from our Committee plan to meet with the five municipalities we represent that are jointly designated under-serviced for family physicians – the City of Pembroke, the Town of Petawawa, and the Townships of Laurentian Valley, Bonnechere Valley and North Algona/Wilberforce. We will be working with them to develop a cooperative and coordinated plan to collectively go forward and successfully recruit new family physicians to the area,” she said.

Ms. Pringle noted that several other municipalities in the Upper Ottawa Valley have already taken action to address their own physician shortages through the hiring of dedicated recruiters who devote their time to active recruitment of family physicians.

“Our communities need this type of individual working for us and attending job fairs, one of the largest of which is coming up in September involving five of the province’s six medical schools over five days. In order to be competitive with other Ontario communities also designated under-serviced, we have to continue to have a strong presence at this event and others like it,” Ms. Pringle said.

Additionally, for residents without a family physician who live in these five municipalities, the Committee plans to set up a patient registration list which will serve several purposes.

“First, this list will provide us with a concrete number of people without a family physician. This can then be used to provide leverage for funding opportunities that may exist to assist us with recruitment efforts,” said Pembroke Regional Hospital President and CEO Pierre Noel, who is a member of the Committee.

“Secondly, it will provide us with information that can be used when meeting with potential recruits to provide evidence that there is more than enough patient-base to justify setup of a practice,” Mr. Noel said. Details regarding the list and how area residents can have their names added will be made available in the next few weeks once logistical details have been worked out.

“We recognize the fear and concern many area residents are now feeling with the loss of another family physician, and we feel that through a collaborative effort with the municipalities we support, we can build on the success this Committee has already had in terms of specialist recruitment for the attraction and retention of family physicians to serve those in need,” Ms. Pringle said.

The Upper Ottawa Valley Medical Recruitment Committee is a community-based group with a mandate to assist in increasing the availability and delivery of primary health care services to individuals and families in Pembroke, Petawawa, Laurentian Valley, Bonnechere Valley and North Algona/Wilberforce.

Its membership is comprised of interested community members with invited representation from the five municipalities, the County of Renfrew, the Pembroke Regional Hospital, local community health centres, the local community of family health professionals and the Upper Ottawa Valley Chamber of Commerce.

The committee is accountable to and reports annually to the communities it serves.

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